

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 SCS-06 HA-05 CA-01 PPT-01
IO-13 EB-08 COME-00 AID-05 OPIC-03 SS-15 NSCE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 741
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 724

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, DM
SUBJ: BENNETT ARREST CASE: POSSIBLE VISIT OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY HARROP

REF: A. STATE 122949 B. COTONOU 718 (NOTAL)

1. WE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARROP TO COTONOU. WE HAVE DOUBTS, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE UTILITY OF THE VISIT AT THIS TIME. AS NOTED IN REF B, WHICH APPARENTLY CROSSED WITH REF A, BENNETT'S DETENTION APPEARS TO BE LINKED TO DELICATE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) IS WELL AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO BENNETT CASE BUT AT THIS POINT APPEALS TO REASON OR TO A SENSE OF JUSTICE ARE UNLIKELY TO PRODUCE RESULTS UNLESS BENIN STANDS TO LOSE SOMETHING BY NOT ACTING. THAT "SOMETHING" IS ITS REPUTATION.

2. BENIN'S SENSITIVITY ABOUT ITS INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION IS EVIDENT FROM THE FACT THAT THE BENINESE HAVE ACTIVELY WORKED TO DISSUADE US FROM ISSUING TRAVEL ADVISORY WHICH WOULD HURT FLOW OF TOURISM TO THE COUNTRY AND REFLECT UNFAVORABLY ON THE REVOLUTION. SIMILARLY, GPRB IS ANXIOUS TO HAVE FOREIGN CAPITAL AND WOULD NOT LIKE TO BE BLACKLISTED AS AN UNSAFE
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PLACE IN WHICH TO DO BUSINESS. AS RECOMMENDED IN REF B, WE BELIEVE DEPARTMENT SHOULD CALL IN BENINESE AMBASSADOR OR CHARGE AND MAKE CLEAR OUR INTENTION TO CARRY OUT BOTH THESE ACTIONS, I.E., ISSUE TRAVEL ADVISORY AND WARNING TO BUSINESSMEN, UNLESS THERE IS POSITIVE MOVEMENT ON THE BENNETT CASE. IN ADDITION, BELIEVE WE SHOULD HOLD BENINESE AMBASSADOR TO PROMISE HE MADE TO DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARROP IN

NOVEMBER 1977 TO PROVIDE OFFICIAL, WRITTEN CONFIRMATION OF MANNER
IN WHICH DETAINED U.S. CITIZENS WILL BE HANDLED.

3. IF ALL MEASURES IN PARA TWO HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITHOUT
RESULT, THEN BELIEVE THAT HIGH-LEVEL VISIT WOULD BE THE
OCCASION TO DELIVER ULTIMATUM TO GPRB. UNLESS THESE CAN BE
TAKEN BY MAY 25 -- WHICH MAY, IN ANY CASE, BE TOO SHORT A
TIME FRAME IN WHICH TO EXPECT REALISTIC ACTION FROM THE
BENINESE -- WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE HARROP VISIT AT THIS TIME
WOULD BE USEFUL IN EXPEDITING BENNETT CASE.

4. A FURTHER CONSIDERATION IS OBTAINING OF APPOINTMENTS.
WE WOULD NEED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS TO LINE UP MINISTERIAL OR
DEPUTY MINISTERIAL LEVEL MEETINGS. WE WOULD WANT TO ENSURE
THAT AN OFFICIAL OF HARROP'S STANDING RECEIVED APPROPRIATE
COURTESIES, AND TWO WEEKS WOULD BE MINIMUM PERIOD TO ALLOW.

5. IF DEPARTMENT AGREES TO PROPOSED TRAVEL ADVISORY AND
WARNING TO BUSINESSMEN AND CONVEYS THIS INFORMATION TO
BENINESE OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, CHARGE WOULD APPRECIATE
BEING AUTHORIZED TO DELIVER SAME MESSAGE IMMEDIATELY
AFTERWARD TO GPRB FOREIGN MINISTRY. PERHAPS IN THIS
FASHION BENINESE CAN BE PERSUADED TO ABIDE BY ACCEPTED
RULES OF INTERNATIONAL CONDUCT. THOMPSON

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